

286/96



UNDER
SEC 325/2
21 FEB 1997
CENT SEC

Northern Ireland Office
Stormont Castle
Belfast BT4 3ST

ASST 558/2
SEC 24 FEB 1997
CENT SEC

Mr Dick Spring TD
Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs
Iveagh House
80 St Stephen's Green
DUBLIN 2

20 February 1997

Dear Dick: C *Mr G...* *Mr McAuley 25/2*

You were kind enough to tell me recently of your Government's plans to make a bid to host the World Summer Games of the Special Olympics in Ireland in 2003.

There is, as you know, a significant Northern Ireland component to "Special Olympics Ireland". And I have heard many good things about their work, in terms of the contribution it has been making to promoting social inclusion, and the development of North/South friendship and understanding. You may recall, for example, last year's "Special Olympics Torch Run", in which the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana collaborated in an impressive fund-raising effort for "Special Olympics".

I can, therefore, readily imagine the further benefits which could flow from a successful bid. I am certain that it would be welcomed in both parts of the island of Ireland. I understand too that the intention is that participating athletes would be hosted for a time on a voluntary basis in town both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic. For all these reasons therefore, I very much hope that Ireland can play host to the special Olympics in 2003 and I would therefore like to assure you of our full support and encouragement for your bid.

Yours sincerely
Asa

SOFS/30265